

WHEN YOU NEED A GRANT WRITER

Grants allow nonprofit organizations to create innovative programs, fill service gaps, and expand their services to underserved populations. They can play an integral role in the diversification of your funding portfolio. However, identifying, preparing and winning grants, whether federal or private, can be challenging.

Below are some suggestions and resources the DC Office of Partnerships and Grant Services (OPGS), part of the Executive Office of the Mayor, has compiled to assist you in considering the benefits of hiring a professional writer, identifying prospective consultants, and, finally, working effectively with the grant writer.

A. THE COSTS AND BENEFITS

Preparing grants takes time and skill. Often grant guidelines can be confusing and complex. Competition is stiff. A qualified, professional grant writer with past experience and proven success can take the burden of coordinating the grant development process and assist your organization in ensuring that you have a technically sound proposal. They can also provide guidance as to the program's purpose and idiosyncrasies in the application process, as well as bring objectivity to the development process.

There are three important things to think about when considering the hiring of a professional consultant:

1. *Grant writing services are typically not cheap.* Assess and be sure of your ability to pay the consultant fee. Shop and ask around. You may find one of your Board members or other volunteers has writing expertise and is willing to assist you on a pro bono or low-cost basis.
2. *Grant writers should not develop projects or programs for your organization.* Nonprofits and their partners must design the program and define the parameters of the budget to ensure that the grant proposal fits with existing programs and the organizational strategic plan. The primary role of grant writers is to professionally package applications so they adhere to grantor requirements.
3. *Grant writers must have verifiable relevant experience and skills to produce the applications.* Look for proven success writing federal grants, amount of grant dollars awarded, other relevant experience in the specific program area. Look for grant writers who have experience as proposal readers for grant panel reviews. Ask for references. Ask for samples of written proposals.

B. IDENTIFYING A GRANT WRITER

If, when you have evaluated your organization's needs and resources, you determine that the assistance of an outside expert writer will improve your chances of winning this competition, you will want to procure the services of the consultant as early in the proposal development process as possible. This will give them full advantage of brainstorming meetings and better insight as to what your organization wishes to accomplish.

The following resources may help you identify potential grant writers. It is important that you conduct your own due diligence before selecting any consultant or other professional to assist your organization.

Association of Fundraising Professionals

AFP is the leading professional organization for fundraising executives who work for nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. The DC Metro chapter has over 950 members.
(703) 684-0410, info@afpdc.org, www.afpnet.org

Association of Proposal Management Professionals

The National Chapter of the APMP is made up of professionals from all areas of proposal expertise from proposal planning and development to proposal production.
www.apmp-nca.org

CharityChannel Consultants Registry

CharityChannel is an online community of over 10,000 nonprofit professionals. The consultant registry enables nonprofits to search for consultants by location, name or area of expertise.

1-949-589-5938, editors@charitychannel.com, www.charitychannel.com

Greater DC Cares' Skills-Based Volunteer Program

Greater DC Cares provides volunteer opportunities at nonprofits throughout the Greater Washington area. Its Skills-Based Volunteering Program helps skilled professionals connect to community-based nonprofits with opportunities that are usually project-based. Grant writing and other organizational development projects are just a few of the opportunities offered.

(202) 777-4443, <http://www.dc-cares.org/>

Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations

The Maryland Nonprofit Association assists nonprofits to obtain the professional services and technical assistance they need to operate effectively. The consultant databank is a collection of services and product for use by nonprofit organizations. Services include resource development.

(301) 565-0505, toll free within Maryland (877) 565-0707, www.mdnonprofit.org

Center for Nonprofit Advancement's VENDORBANK

The mission of the Center for Nonprofit Advancement (formerly Washington Council of Agencies) is to strengthen, promote, and represent nonprofit organizations in metropolitan Washington in order to help them better meet the diverse needs of their communities. Its VendorBank is an online directory of professionals, consultants and businesses that work with nonprofits. Nearly 200 services are currently listed.

(202) 457-0540, www.nonprofitadvancement.org, www.vendorbank.org

III. WORKING WITH A GRANT WRITER

Once a grant writer is hired, it is imperative that your staff remains engaged in the grants development process. To ensure a successful end product, you should:

- ☒ Devote staff resources to work closely with the grant writer
- ☒ Thoroughly understand the application guidance provided by the grantor
- ☒ Develop required partnerships and collaborations
- ☒ Collect and make available agency-specific data
- ☒ Ensure draft proposal is critically reviewed by qualified readers
- ☒ Work with grant writer to prepare budget and budget narrative
- ☒ Obtain all necessary certifications, assurances and signatures
- ☒ Make sure enough copies of application are produced
- ☒ Deliver application to grantor by the deadline

The Office of Partnerships and Grant Services facilitates the establishment and enhancement of public-private partnerships and grant applications that support the Mayor's vision and the District's strategic priorities. For more information about grants and related projects, please contact the office.

The Office of Partnerships and Grant Services

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 324

Washington, DC 20004

Phone: (202) 727-8900

Fax: (202) 727-1652

Web: www.opgs.dc.gov